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Abstract

The position of the Jew in the Middle Ages and the Jewish stereotype as it appears in "The Merchant of Venice" and "Oliver Twist" are the subjects of this publication. An introductory essay analyzes the characters of Shylock and Fagin, and a study guide continues this discussion and presents suggested classroom activities, discussion topics, and a bibliography for teachers and students. A 4-week model instructional unit presents a narrower range of specific learning activities, evaluation techniques for the teacher, and a listing of books, movies, recordings, and other enrichment aids. A concluding two-part essay summarizes Jewish history in the Middle Ages and the evolution of the Jewish stereotype in that period. (LH)

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THE IMAGE OF THE JEW IN LITERATURE

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Teachers' Study Guide: Stereotypes in English Literature:

Shylock and Fagin

Film lecture by Ilja Wachs

The Jew in the Middle Ages

Film lecture by Rabbi David W. Silverman
and Rt. Rev. Msgr. Eugene V. Clark

Study Guide by Joseph Mersand, Ph.D.

TE 001 587

The Image of the Jew in Literature and *Jews and Their Religion* are two unique series of inservice training programs for teachers in Catholic parochial schools and for Confraternity of Christian Doctrine courses. Now available either on film or videotape, they were produced as a jointly-sponsored project of the Archdiocese of New York and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. These programs, which in some instances can also be profitably used in the actual classroom situation, have been supplemented by resource units and instructional guides that attempt to provide teachers with the background and tools necessary for the teaching of varied material relating to the Jews. The programs are a response to the direction taken in Vatican II Council and the initiative of the American Hierarchy. As such, they bring some of America's leading Jewish scholars to the Catholic teacher in particular, as the search is continued for the best course that Judeo-Christian relations should take in our time.

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THE JEWISH STEREOTYPE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE:
Shylock and Fagin
by ILJA WACHS

Note. The following text is based on the original script delivered by Mr. Wachs, professor of literature at Sarah Lawrence College, N.Y., on closed-circuit T.V., and is now available on 16mm. film or videotape. For information on rental or purchase, write to: Audio-Visual Dept., Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 315 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016, or contact the regional office nearest you.

It is a curious fact that, even though they are separated in time by well over two centuries, both Shakespeare's Shylock and Dickens' Fagin, the two best-known Jewish figures in English literature, are not only equally deformed and monstrous but are so remarkably alike in all their basic characteristics. This is only another way of saying that the uniqueness of the stereotype of the Jew (as distinguished from other stereotypes in literature) lies in the fact that it has tended in the past to remain essentially the same, in spite of centuries of radical social and cultural change.

The stereotypic image of the Jew inherited by Dickens can be traced even beyond Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare, after all, did not invent the stereotype of the Jewish moneylender, for by the time he wrote his play the Jews had long since ceased to be inhabitants of England, and thus could not have served him as a living model. The Jews had been, in fact, expelled from England in the late 13th century, and while there is some reason to believe that a small number of Christianized Jews managed to remain, there is no evidence that they were visible as Jews or that they continued to be active as moneylenders. By contrast, in the medieval world, the Jew had been the sole figure to fill the role of moneylender. The medieval church, accepting the Old Testament ban on lending money at interest, had strictly forbidden the practice of usury among the faithful, condemning it as a sin against nature and society. However, since there was always a need for ready cash in the running of kingdoms, and since the Jews were not subject to the laws of the faith, both Church and state had made the Jews the official purveyors of money

to their coffers. It is therefore clear why the Jew entered the literature of late medieval Europe primarly as a usurer and how, as a consequence, he soon became the butt of all the hatred and contempt of the Christian world.

At the same time, of course, the Jew was already carrying a far weightier burden: the historic charge of deicide. On the basis of the tradition that he had been responsible for the Crucifixion, there arose a mass of stories, myths and legends that vilified the Jew as the anti-Christ and as the incarnation of the Devil himself. As a result, a whole range of evil and murderous practices was attributed to Jews that often led to their wholesale massacre. As incarnations of the Devil, for example, they were often accused of kidnapping and murdering Christian children for the ritual purposes of their religion. And, when the dread bubonic plague swept over Europe, they were charged with having begun the epidemics by poisoning the wells of their Christian neighbors.

It is with this series of received images — the Jew as a hateful and greedy usurer, and the Jew as a figure of demonic evil — rather than with any observable reality that Shakespeare worked in creating the figure of Shylock. In addition, he also derived material from received models that were then current in the Elizabethan theater. A particularly vivid model existed in the person of Barabbas, the villain of Christopher Marlowe's play, *The Jew of Malta*. In Marlowe's version, the moneylender, Barabbas, is at once a figure of monumental greed and demonic destructiveness. At the same time that Barabbas dedicates his life to the monomaniacal accumulation of gold, he openly boasts of such practices as wholesale fornication, well-poisoning, monk-murder and the like.

The extent to which this stereotypic image of the Jew had become a theatrical convention during Elizabethan days is indicated by the fact that, in playing both Barabbas and Shylock, actors (so far as we know) used the standard paraphernalia for depicting Jewish characters: a capacious cloak, a big red putty nose, claws and cloven hooves.

In the absence of any actual Jewish problem in the England of his time, one can only surmise that Shakespeare's prime purpose in reviving the stereotype of the Jewish usurer was to use this conveniently accessible figure as a means of attack on the growing acquisitiveness of many of his countrymen. From evidence supplied by a careful reading of many of his other plays, it is apparent that Shakespeare was deeply troubled by the impact of the new commercial system on the old values which grew out of Christian humanist tradition. What he has done in *The Merchant of Venice* is to concentrate in the single figure of the Jewish moneylender all the rapaciousness and greed that had become so pervasive in his own age. As the outsider, known and understood only for his usurious and demonic nature, the Jew lent himself perfectly to this role.

In the person of Shylock, the Jew becomes the ultimate stereotype because he has been made to embody a lust (in this case, for money) that is so pure and absolute that it obliterates almost everything else about him. Out of Shakespeare's desire to exemplify greed in its purest form, Shylock has been stripped, simplified and narrowed down until little remains of him as a human being — apart from his seemingly insatiable lust for wealth. Even in his sleep Shylock does not dream the dreams of ordinary human beings, but is haunted instead by visions of money-bags. In short, he seems incapable of investing his energies in anything but the accumulation of wealth for its own sake. He feels almost nothing for his daughter, and when she runs away with his jewels and gold, it is essentially their loss that he mourns:

> *Shylock* — How now, Tubal, what news from Genoa? hast thou found my daughter?
>
> *Tubal* — I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.
>
> *Shylock* — Why there, there, there, there! a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now: — two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels. — I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? — Why, so — and I know not what's spent in the search. Why, thou loss upon loss! the thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge: nor no ill luck stirring but what lights o'my shoulders; no sighs but o'my breathing; no tears but o'my shedding.

Beginning with a lust for gold that takes on the form of a merciless practice of usury, Shylock ends by equating *all of life* with a single object — money. "My daughter! O my ducats!" he cries, and with that horrifying cry he equates human love — in this case, the love of father for child — with something as impersonal as money!

> *Solario* — I never heard a passion so confused,
> So strange, outrageous, and so variable
> As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
> *My daughter! — O my ducats! — O my daughter!*
> *Fled with a Christian! — O my Christian ducats! —*
> *Justice! the law! my ducats and my daughter!*
> *A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,*
> *Of double ducats, stolen from me by my daughter!*
> *And jewels, — two stones, two rich and precious stones,*
> *Stolen by my daughter! — Justice! find the girl!*
> *She hath the stones upon her and the ducats!*
> *Salarino* — Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
> Crying, — his stones, his daughter, and his ducats.

And, since the possession of money rather than the experience of love, friendship and human fellowship has become Shylock's end in life, it follows that, on learning he has lost most of his wealth, his final lines in the play are a simple declaration of a sickness unto death: "I pray you, give me leave to go from hence — I am not well."

But at the same time that Shakespeare makes effective use of the inherited stereotype of the Jewish moneylender in the person of Shylock, he adds another dimension to his portrait by resurrecting the stereotype of the Jew as a demonic figure. At the outset of the play he allows us to see Shylock in more or less human terms. Thus, although the various motives attributed to him are by no means admirable, they are nonetheless *human* motives. For example, Shylock's hatred of Christians, Shakespeare suggests, is derived from their cruel and contemptuous treatment of him. And so, in explaining why he hates Antonio, the Christian merchant, he says: "You did call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, and spat upon my Jewish gabardine. You did void your rheum upon my beard. And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur." This hatred lies in the fact that Antonio has thwarted his usurious schemes by lending money free of interest to Shylock's potential customers. Yet none of these motives, however human, really begin to account for the extremity of Shylock's savagery at the end of the play. Finally, one can only conclude that Shylock's villainy cannot be understood in terms of either any single motive or any complex of motives. Something at once more primitive and deep, one is made to feel, must be responsible for Shylock's inhuman hatred of Antonio.

Evidence of this can already be seen early on in the bond that Shylock exacts of Antonio in return for the money he lends him. At first the horrible bargain, in which the Jew is to receive his pound of flesh, seems nothing more than an expression of his hatred, symbolized in terms of the eye-for-an-eye conception of justice of the Old Testament. And certainly the reader is not made to feel that Shylock's bargain is to be taken literally. But then Shakespeare goes on to make Shylock act in these literal terms — i.e., to crave actively the sadistic mutilation of Antonio's body, even though he eventually is offered far more money than Antonio owes him. So that when Shylock asks for "an equal pound of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken in what part of your body pleaseth me," he can no longer be understood to be acting out of any human motive. On the contrary, he has left the human pale and degenerated into a state of bestial savagery. Similarly, when Bassanio asks Shylock, "Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?" at the very moment the Jew is preparing to actually cut out Antonio's heart, what Shakespeare is saying to us is that the world of Christian culture and civilization is confronted (in the figure of Shylock) with an order of

evil and bestiality that goes well beyond the normal human and Christian ethic. Or, as Bassanio puts it to Shylock: "Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith, to hold opinion with Pythagoras, that souls of animals infuse themselves into the trunks of men . . . for thy desires are wolvish, bloodied, starved, and ravenous."

The ultimate emergence of Shylock as a bloody, ravenous wolf prepared to devour in physical terms another human being is not wholly unexpected. In the course of the action which leads up to the dramatic confrontation in front of the Duke, there are over a dozen references to Shylock as a cur or as a dog, and various characters in the play harbor serious doubts as to whether or not it is even possible to regard Shylock as a human being. "Never," says Solario, "did I know a creature that did bear the shape of man so keen and greedy to condemn a man." And where Shylock's ferocity cannot be sufficiently accounted for by endowing him with the nature of an animal, several characters offer the traditional explanation that he is a kind of devil. "Let me say amen betimes," Solario says again, "lest the devil cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew."

In the final analysis, Shakespeare's portrayal of Shylock as subhuman prevails over that of Shylock as the epitome of human greed. For Shylock's hatred has become so inhuman and total that he spurns the offer of twenty times the value of the original loan that should have more than satisfied his greed. What he finally wants, it is clear, is something else; something that goes much deeper: "What's that (Antonio's heart) good for? To bait fish withal — if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge."

Still another kind of stereotype emerges from the play — a stereotype that does not lie so much in the characterization of Shylock, as in the effect this characterization has upon the particular world in which Shylock moves. For precisely to the extent that Shylock has become the pure embodiment of both greed and bestiality, so the Christian characters are portrayed in equally extreme terms, i.e., as totally humane, civilized and unselfish to the point of saintliness. Thus, in sharp and almost absurd contrast to Shylock, Antonio is the embodiment of generosity — the perfect innocent who bankrupts himself and is even willing to risk death so that his friend Bassanio can secure the money he needs to marry Portia. "Be assured," he tells Bassanio, "my purse, my person, my extremest means lie all unlocked to your occasions." For Antonio, as well as for Portia, Bassanio and the other Christian characters in the play, money exists for no other purpose than to be given away as an expression of love and friendship. This Christian world which Shakespeare created bears no more resemblance to reality than does Shylock's inhuman villainy. So that, in the end, when Shylock and all he represents has been banished from the court, we are left with "the good people," and with their seemingly unending flow of wealth, generosity and love. Unfor-

tunately, however, the trouble with this kind of resolution is that we are thereby absolved from any need to reflect upon the greed and inhumanity which is in all of us and which tends to dominate so much of our lives. Instead, these qualities have been displaced onto Shylock, *and Shylock simply is not us.*

It comes as some surprise, when we consider the centuries that intervened between *The Merchant of Venice* and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist,* that the criminal Jewish villain of the novel should reveal many of the same stereotypic qualities that entered into the portrayal of Shylock. Although Fagin is a "fence" rather than a moneylender, he shares with Shylock a pure and unqualified greed. In Fagin's intense lust for money, gold and precious objects, we find again that abstract passion for gain which is native to Jewish stage villains. Fagin's eyes glisten as he draws a stolen gold watch from his coffers, or when at night he stealthily opens his treasure chests and one by one fondles rings, brooches and other articles of jewelry. When he plans a robbery, simply the prospect of coming into possession of some family's gold plate is enough to throw him into a state of feverish excitement. (" 'Such a plate my dear, such a plate!' said the Jew, rubbing his hands and elevating his eyebrows in a rapture of anticipation.") On the other hand, when Fagin is forced to share with his accomplices the profits of his villainous enterprises, he counts out the banknotes with "a sigh for every piece of money," as if he were losing in this process precious parts of himself.

Although the stereotyped quality of Fagin's avarice is enough to remove him (as it does Shylock) from any recognizable realm of reality, Dickens doesn't stop short here. On the contrary, Fagin is credited with a whole spectrum of diabolical qualities that clearly link him with the Devil. When Bill Sikes' dog growls at Fagin, Sikes tells him, "Lie down. Don't you know the devil with his greatcoat on?"

Fagin makes his first appearance in a dark room blackened by age and dirt, where he is seen standing in front of a fire — appropriately enough with a toasting-fork in his hands:

> The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt. There was a deal table before the fire: upon which were a candle, stuck in a ginger-beer bottle, two or three pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate. In a frying-pan, which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantelshelf by a string, some sausages were cooking: and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare; and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying-pan and the clothes-horse, over which a great number of silk handkerchiefs were hanging. Several rough beds made of old sacks were huddled side by side on the floor. Seated round the table were four or five boys . . . smoking long clay pipes, and drinking spirits with the air of middle-aged men.

Fagin's hair is described as red, and red hair, we know, was a stock method (in medieval mystery plays) of identifying the Jew as the Devil. Moreover, his kidnapping of innocent Christian children links him irretrievably to the medieval traditions of Jewish villainy, to the old belief that the Jews kidnapped and murdered Christian children for ritual purposes. Similarly, the suggestion made in the novel that Fagin had planned to poison several of his co-conspirators is a clear echo of another ancient belief that the Jew was a habitual poisoner of wells.

Fagin, it can be seen, is subhuman as well as diabolical. With his face constantly distorted in a hideous grin, the Jew mutters deep curses and shakes his fist whenever he is thwarted. In moments of rage and cupidity, his eyes glisten; whereas he appears to be lynx-eyed when he is in an especially sly and cunning mood. In endowing Fagin with fangs in place of teeth, Dickens is clearly appropriating a traditional view previously associated with *The Merchant of Venice*. In addition, the physical description of him includes such details as the fact that his nails are long and black, that his fingers are yellow and that he seems to possess claws rather than hands.

But perhaps the most sinister image of Fagin is one that combines suggestions of diabolism with sub-human bestiality. "Gliding stealthily along," Dickens writes, "creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved, crawling forth by night in search of some rich offal for a meal."

Only if one remembers that the novel strives to evoke the inward terror of a sensitive child trapped in London's hellish underworld can one place this hideous image of Fagin in its proper context. Thus, it touches not only on the traditional snake image associated with the Fall, but also on the child's terror of being swallowed and devoured. That terror is explicitly felt by Oliver, who "as he met the Jew's searching look, felt that his pale face and trembling limbs were neither unnoticed nor unrelished by that wary old gentleman."

Fagin, assuredly, is far removed from any recognizable human reality. In using him as a central figure, what Dickens has done is to appropriate the stereotypic image of the Jew for the end-purpose of creating a symbolic monster who would epitomize all the greed and malevolence of the profit-mad society that systematically exploited and brutalized the children of the poor, a society that Dickens knew only too well and hated. Unfortunately, however, the technique of exploiting the Jewish stereotype in order to allegorize the evil endemic to the real world has resulted (as in *The Merchant of Venice*) in a novelistic world that is stereotyped in all other respects as well. Mr. Brownlow, the benevolent old gentleman who takes Oliver home to tend him, and who is full of nothing but the

milk of human kindness, is no more believable, ultimately, than are Fagin and Oliver's other tormentors. Similarly, Harriet Maylie and her aunt, Mrs. Maylie (the other two characters who protect and adopt Oliver) are wholly and almost unbearably soft, kind and gentle. When Oliver becomes ill, they shed tears and look after him. They are infinite tenderness and maternal concern incarnate. Like Mr. Brownlow they give endlessly to Oliver, though he is a stranger who, as a matter of fact, they have every reason to suspect is in reality a criminal. In short, the tenderness, love and maternal concern shown by these people to Oliver are equivalent to the greed, hate and brutality that characterize the actions of the Jewish villain. But the balance is false: all black and white, with no shadows or greys.

The use of the figure of the Jewish villain as one pole of a world divided into absolutely evil and absolutely good characters has always had implicit in it something of the child's vision of a black and white world, with the child's typical denial of the complexity and ambiguity of life. Even Shakespeare came perilously close to fashioning Shylock into a kind of Jewish bogeyman, a creature out of some child's nightmare. In *Oliver Twist*, particularly, the stereotypes both of the Jewish villain and of the characters who embody Christian goodness are almost wholly compounded out of the child's simplistic view of the world. So that what we are finally left with is not so much a novel which deals on a mature level with the suffering, abandonment and rescue of a ten-year old child, as one in which everything is filtered through the sensibility and awareness of this child — the child in Dickens, the child that is in all of us. The major figures in *Oliver Twist*, both good and bad, take whatever substance they have from the imagination of the child. In effect, they are either infinitely good parents, as they might be experienced in a child's fantasy life: always loving, gentle, kind and accepting; or, like Fagin, they are a child's typical fantasy of the bad parent: powerful, sadistic and punishing. If, in teaching this novel, we were to ask our students to recall the most terrifying nightmares each of them had experienced, and were then to catalogue the traits these nightmares had in common, it would soon become evident that, in his depiction of Fagin's relation to Oliver, Dickens is much closer to the kind of larger-than-life experience to be found in the dreams and waking terrors of childhood than he is to our adult experience of the actual world.

The pedagogic conclusion that can be drawn from this brief treatment of two famous works of English literature, each of which includes a classic stereotype of the Jew, is that the emphasis in the classroom ought not to be exclusively on the invalidity and injustice of such stereotypes. An equal emphasis should be placed upon the effect that stereotypes of any kind can have on a person's capacity to perceive reality and to act

morally in the world in which he lives. By concentrating all the evil and greed in the world in the figure of a Jew, the creator of this stereotype tends to deprive his audience of the ability to recognize similar traits in themselves, and to reinforce the all-too-human tendency to project onto others one's own destructive and inhuman impulses. At the same time, by creating a world divided into either wholly good or wholly bad human beings, the author robs his readers of the ability to perceive human reality in complex and adult terms; and makes them vulnerable to experiencing the world from the standpoint of the rather limited awareness and sensibility of the child.*

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* Following Professor Wachs' lecture, there was a panel discussion (the text of which is not included). Along with Professor Wachs, the participants were three English teachers from the New York area:

1. Mr. Eugene Farrelly, Fordham University Preparatory School
2. Sister Christine, Cardinal Spellman High School
3. Brother Steven Lanning, Marist College of Poughkeepsie.

Teachers' Study Guide

prepared by
DR. JOSEPH MERSAND
Past President of the National
Council of Teachers of English
Chairman, English Department
Jamaica High School, New York City

Editorial Committee

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Preface

One of the purposes of this literature series is to sensitize the individual teacher to the general subject by first acquainting him with the facts. Then, by the teacher's own reflections on what he has seen and heard — particularly with respect to causes and the often deleterious outcomes — we may reasonably expect that his horizons will be widened. So that when he finally has occasion to discuss these matters in class, he should be able to teach the material from a truer perspective and against a richer historical background.

The teacher's guide which follows consists of six parts:

1. Introductory remarks
2. Aims of this study guide
3. Classroom activities and discussion topics
4. Bibliography for teachers and students
5. Model instructional unit
6. Supplementary resource unit

It should be clearly understood that this guide is designed *for the teacher,* and is meant to be suggestive, not prescriptive. Each teacher or supervisor viewing the filmed or televised program will very likely think of other possibilities as a result of his or her personal interests and experiences. At the same time, many of you will undoubtedly see ways in which the materials presented in this guide can be introduced into your classrooms more appropriately and effectively. A guide at best is only a useful tool whose basic rationale is to aid the teacher and stimulate his creativity. The rest and most crucial part of the job is in the hands of each one of you.

In this particular guide, the teacher may wish to explore more fully *background material* related to the subject. Such a possibility is afforded in the supplementary resource unit, which deals with stereotypic images of the Jews during the Middle Ages. Additional class activities (and topics for teacher research) will undoubtedly come to mind as the teacher considers Shylock and Fagin both in *historical and literary perspective.*

Introductory Remarks

In Professor Wach's lecture, we are introduced to the question of Jewish stereotype as it appears in English literature — particularly as it is handled by William Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* and by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*.

Shakespeare's purpose in writing *The Merchant of Venice* and in creating the figure of Shylock has been the subject of discussion for more than 250 years, and the debate still continues. That Shakespeare was hardly likely to have come in contact with any Jews is accepted by most scholars (Jews, it should be remembered, had been expelled from England toward the end of the 13th century). His conception of the Jew, therefore, was the traditional or stereotypic one. Assuming he had read or heard ballads about Jews, he was probably familiar with the sad fate of little Hugh of Lincoln at the hands of certain Jews. Or, if he read such poetical works as Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale," John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, he would have received only further confirmation of the strong antipathy to Jews that existed in England even a century after their expulsion.

In medieval times the stage-Jew was invariably evil and grotesque. In the Crucifixion pageants held at York, the alleged brutalities of the Jews were emphasized. In the Corpus Christi pageants, too, the Jews were characterized as evil and inhuman, and in *The Betraying of Christ* and *The Judgment Day* were made ridiculous in appearance as well.[1] Plays produced somewhat later by the guilds continued such anti-Jewish portrayals.

In Elizabethan times, if a Jewish character appeared on the stage, it was generally in the person of a usurer, who was a despicable character in many other respects as well. But it was Christopher Marlowe, in his *Jew of Malta* (1592), who probably reached the nadir in the stage presentation of a Jew. (His Barabbas commits a whole catalogue of sins and eventually meets his death in a burning cauldron.)

There are good grounds to believe that, when Shakespeare began his *Merchant of Venice*, he originally had in mind a romantic comedy in

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[1] Toby Lelyveld, *Shylock on the Stage* (Cleveland, 1960), pp. 3-4.

which the character of Shylock would play a far more minor role than the one he ultimately did. If we accept this interpretation advanced by a number of reputable literary critics, it is not difficult then to understand why Shakespeare, in portraying Shylock, would have been content to fall back on the convenient stereotype and create a "cardboard figure" — particularly since it was one that was certain to be understood by the audience of his day.

However (to continue with this interpretation), Shakespeare, being the superb artist that he was, was finally not satisfied with the traditional stereotype. Or, to put it another way, he became increasingly interested and intrigued by the dramatic possibilities inherent in a more human and true-to-life portrayal of the figure of the Jew. The result was that he "filled out" the character of Shylock to a point where he can no longer be simply regarded as just another stock figure, and where his role has grown to major proportions.

George Pierce Baker, whose English 47 Workshop at Harvard University was the early training ground for some of America's leading dramatists of the 1920's, 30's and 40's, is one of the leading exponents of this view. In his *Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist,* he clearly states that:

> . . . in Shylock we have the first instance in the Elizabethan drama of a sympathetic presentation of an unpopular figure.

And he continues:

> I am no believer in the theory that Shakespeare meant Shylock to be a comic figure.[2]

Still another exponent of this view — and one, incidentally, that has been adopted by many of the most recent portrayers of the role of Shylock — is well expressed by Peter Quennell in his *Shakespeare, a Biography* (1963):

> So far, Shakespeare's intention seems plain enough — he would draw the portrait of a bloodthirsty Jewish miscreant; but, as he wrote, the imaginative artist assumed control of the commercial playwright, and Shylock began to address the audience, no longer furiously for himself alone but passionately and eloquently on behalf of an entire persecuted race whose sufferings comprehended his.[3]

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[2] George Pierce Baker, *The Development of Shakespeare as a Dramatist* (New York, 1907), p. 215.

[3] Peter Quennell, *Shakespeare, a Biography* (Cleveland and New York, 1963), p. 176. See also J. Middleton Murry, *Shakespeare* (London, 1936), pp. 181-211.

There are, of course, other opinions. Hazelton Spencer in his *The Art and Life of William Shakespeare,* written thirty-three years later in 1940, declares just as positively that:

> *(The Merchant of Venice)* has an anti-Semitic edge, and in recent years many secondary schools have wisely removed the play from the curriculum. But its anti-Semitism is of a different stripe from the cold-blooded political variety which disgraces our unhappy times. Shakespeare simply accepts the Jews as a notoriously bad lot; he constructs no fantastic theorems about them, he invents no slanders, he fabricates no documents, he proclaims no pogroms. . . . He never drew a noble Jew. To require that of him would be to insist on his being very far ahead of his time. It is highly remarkable and to his credit that Shylock is *thoroughly human,* being neither a Machiavellian like Marlowe's Barabbas nor the fiend in human form of some earlier theorists in anthropology.[4]

In his film presentation, Professor Ilja Wachs presents his own highly personal theory as to Shakespeare's intentions, one which merits close study. In his view, Shakespeare revived the stereotype of the Jewish usurer essentially for the purpose of attacking the growing materialism of the Elizabethan world. Hence he concentrated in Shylock all the rapacity and greed that had become so pervasive in English society. This point of view is certainly a novel one and should lead to much interesting discussion, both among teachers themselves and among students in the classroom.

In turning from a consideration of the characterization of Shylock to that of Fagin, we have what one critic has called "a more nearly archetypal Jew-villain."[5] Whereas Shylock and Barabbas might have claimed the economic, political and social disadvantages under which they were compelled to live as causes for their anti-social behavior, Fagin would have had no such ready excuse. For, in addition to being a "fence" (a criminal occupation which he could at least try to justify or rationalize), he was a monster stripped of all human qualities.

This said, the fact nonetheless remains (as Professor Wachs indicates) that Fagin possesses nearly all of the stereotypic traits ascribed to Jews from their earliest appearance in literature. Fagin shows, for example, a pure and unqualified psychology of greed; similarly, his first appearance in the novel reveals his diabolical nature. Several critics have commented on Dickens' line: "So did the Jew warm himself, toasting-fork in hand."

We know that Dickens received a letter accusing him of anti-Semitism in his portrayal of Fagin, and that he defended himself by saying that

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[4] Hazelton Spencer, *The Art and Life of William Shakespeare* (New York, 1940), p. 240.

[5] Edgar Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali* (Stanford, 1960), p. 116.

Fagin had been made a Jew "because it unfortunately was true of the time to which the story refers, that that class of criminals almost invariably was a Jew."[6] Still it cannot be denied that, in delineating Fagin, Dickens clearly made use of stereotypic Jewish attributes that can readily be traced back to medieval literature. For example:

a) Fagin has red hair (a Jewish attribute in the mystery plays).
b) He kidnaps innocent Christian children. (Compare Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale" and the many variants of the popular ballad, "The Jew's Daughter.")
c) At various times he plans to poison some of his co-conspirators (a popular medieval accusation, particularly during the time of the Black Plague).

The diabolical aspects of Fagin are neatly summed up by the critic Edmund Pugh. "Fagin, the arch-devil, though he is limned in the fewest possible words, stands forth lurid and malignant as the figure of Satan in medieval pageantry. He appears like the mythical Satan, with his toasting fork, and the firelight playing over him."[7]

However, as has already been suggested, Fagin is not only satanic, he is sub-human as well. To quote from Dickens' novel: "As he (Fagin) glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal."

At this point, we might ask ourselves the question: Why did Dickens resurrect the Jewish stereotype of the Middle Ages in his portrayal of Fagin? To this, there are probably as many answers as there are critics. We can probably dismiss the charge of anti-Semitism and accept Dickens' explanation at its full value. That Dickens was intending to draw a character from real life also seems unlikely, since the records of the time reveal no person even remotely resembling Fagin. As for Professor Wachs' explanation, it has been propounded by several other critics as well and, as such, deserves our serious consideration.

Professor Wachs believes that the stereotypes, both of the utterly villainous and inhuman Fagin and of the unbelievably pure and unselfish Christian characters in Dickens' novel, are intimately related to the way children view their world. To a child, things are either black or white, unbelievably terrifying or uncommonly good; his unbridled, uncritical

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[6] For a thorough discussion of the correspondence with Mrs. Davis, see Edgar Johnson's article, "Dickens, Fagin, and Mr. Riah." *Commentary*, IX (1950), 47-50.

[7] Edmund Pugh, *The Charles Dickens Originals* (New York, 1912), p. 251.

imagination cannot see as yet the many gradations of gray. If we accept this theory, we can view *Oliver Twist* as being much closer to the kinds of experience found in the dreams and waking terrors of childhood than to our adult experience with the real world. And, by extension, if we view Fagin and the other characters in the novel through the child-eyes of Oliver, we can begin to comprehend why they present themselves so stereotypically to our own adult vision. (In this connection, it could well be that student reaction to this particular interpretation will prove revealing and insightful, and will provide stimulating material for classroom discussions.)

One final point should be made here. There seems to be no doubt that Dickens was attacking in this novel the atrocious treatment the poor received during his own lifetime. Dickens, a man of only twenty-five when he began to write his monthly installments for *Bentley's Magazine,* was fired with indignation at the horrible conditions which he observed about him. By creating Oliver Twist and making him go through the degrading experiences, both in the workhouse and as an apprentice to Mr. Sowerberry, he was attacking these conditions in the best way he knew how — i.e., by showing their effects upon one of its victims. However, in the opinion of Professor Wachs, he went even one step further, and created the monster-like Fagin to epitomize the malevolence of a profit-mad society that systematically exploited and brutalized the children of the poor.

Aims of This Study Guide

1. To help make clear what aspects of Shylock's nature Shakespeare inherited from the stereotype of the Jew as he appeared in medieval literature.
2. To explain why the Jew figured prominently in medieval life as a moneylender, and the antagonism that this role induced in the community at large.
3. To indicate how the long-standing belief in the demonic nature of the Jew led to his being charged with such crimes as kidnapping Christian children, poisoning wells and causing the Bubonic Plague.
4. To examine several theories as to Shakespeare's purpose in writing *The Merchant of Venice.*
5. To evaluate the theory that Shakespeare revived the stereotype of the Jewish usurer (at a time when Jews had been expelled from England for 300 years) in order to attack the growing materialism of the Elizabethan world.
6. To point out the two-fold stereotype of Shylock the moneylender and Shylock the demonic figure.
7. To compare the stereotyping of the Jew with the stereotyping of the Christian characters in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist.*
8. To compare and contrast the stereotypic qualities of Shylock and Fagin.
9. To examine Dickens' purpose in portraying Fagin as he did.
10. To indicate how the ideas presented by Professor Wachs may best be utilized in a class discussion of stereotypic thinking and the role it plays in the students' daily lives.

Classroom Activities and Discussion Topics

* — indicates topics or activities suitable for the average high school student which will tend, generally, to be effective as class activities.
** — indicates suggestions for the superior high school student which will probably be more appropriate for honors classes and/or individual students ready for more advanced projects.

** 1. Trace historically the portrayal and costuming of Shylock on the stage. In addition to a number of available books on this subject (Toby Lelyveld, in her *Shylock on the Stage*: Cleveland, 1960, has an extensive bibliography) the Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center in New York City has many fine photographs and other illustrative materials. Various members of the class may be assigned to this project and asked to report back to the class on their findings. Particular emphasis should be given to stereotypic elements wherever such exist.

** 2. A study might be made of *The Merchant of Venice* and of the critical reviews during the past quarter-century. The *New York Theatre Critics Reviews* may be consulted for both productions and reviews. *Index to Best Plays Series* (1899-1950) lists all productions of the play given during that period in the annual volumes edited by Burns Mantle and his successors. (A supplement continues the listings to 1960.) Daniel Blum's *A Pictorial History of the American Theatre* (1860-1960) has a number of photographs of actors and settings.

* 3. In his famous speech ("I am a Jew . . ." etc.), Shylock identifies himself as, *first*, a human being; he then considers his specific identity as a Jew in Christian Venice — attempting, at this point to justify his behavior in terms of *vengeance*. Generally speaking, this is one of the obvious "solutions" to oppression. A similar response can be found in *Native Son* by Richard Wright — in Bigger Thomas' criminal protest *as a Negro*. Students should be encouraged to read and report on this book (as well as on any other which presents a minority figure in a like situation). What other "solutions" or "responses" are possible and/or more viable? Discuss.

* 4. The black man has always resented stereotyping (as, indeed, have members of all minority groups), and attempts to change the stereotypic image of the Negro are implicit in much of today's black militancy. Interested students may report on any relevant facets of this problem

(such as decentralization, community control, the hiring of Black personnel in positions of authority, preferential treatment, changes in textbooks and curricula, the inclusion of Black Studies programs, etc.).

** 5. Stereotypes of various nationalities and races have been a part of world literature — e.g., the stage Irishman, the stage Italian, the stage Negro. Students may investigate and report on such examples — attemping at the same time to analyze why none has been as damaging or as unfavorable as that of the Jew.

* 6. A provocative and useful technique for stimulating discussion is to have the class write their comments and opinions in answer to the following question: What do you know or think about Jews and Judaism? It might be best to have these comments remain anonymous when they are handed in, in order to insure frankness and avoid any self-protecting reticence on the part of the students.

Following the collation of these remarks, the teacher might list on the board those that he thinks are most likely to lead to a fruitful discussion on prejudice, distortion and stereotyping. In this discussion the class might be asked to consider each listed response from the following points of view:

a) Do you personally know any Jews?
b) Do you agree or disagree with the response? Why?
c) Does it indicate prejudice, distortion and/or stereotyping? If so, indicate reasons.

Finally, the teacher might check out what changes, if any, took place in individual or class attitudes as a result of the above activity.

** 7. A committee may be assigned to do research aimed at understanding the causes of anti-Semitism and the evolution of the Jewish stereotype in the Middle Ages. Students would (a) investigate the stereotypic image of the Jew produced by the Crusades; (b) analyze the portrayal of the Jew in the poetry, drama and chronicles of the late Middle Ages, and (3) determine the relationship between Christians and Jews before, during, and after the Crusades.

** 8. It might be of interest to students to learn that, when Dickens was a boy and working in Warren's Blacking, he was befriended by an older youth, Bob Fagin. Later on, Dickens took the liberty of using his friend's name in *Oliver Twist*. A provocative essay on this subject that has also had a decisive influence on subsequent criticism is "The Two Scrooges" in Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature* (Oxford, 1947). A report on this essay by a committee or member of the class should lead to a stimulating discussion period.

** 9. A student may be assigned to study the portrait of Fagin in the musical version of the novel, and then make a report to the class. For reviews of this production, consult *The Theatre Critics' Reviews* and *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*.

**10. A study might be made of contemporary criticism of *Oliver Twist*. A committee can be assigned to read appropriate sections of Edgar Johnson's definitive two-volume biography, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph* (New York, 1952).

**11. A similar study may be done on *The Merchant of Venice*. In the series, *Twentieth Century Views* (edited by Kenneth Muir), there is a volume of essays entitled *Shakespeare: the Comedies*, which includes one by the English critic, J. Middleton Murry on "Shakespeare's Method: *The Merchant of Venice*." Students should also be familiar with the Variorum edition of *The Merchant of Venice* (edited by H. H. Furness and published by J. B. Lippincott). Almost all the significant views expressed in any Western language, up to the date of publication in 1880, are to be found in this volume.

**12. A report could be done on Dickens' attitude toward the Jews as revealed in his correspondence with Mrs. Davis, who objected to his portrayal of Fagin. This correspondence is reprinted in full in Cecil Roth's *Anglo-Jewish Letters* (London, 1938), pp. 304-9.

**13. Dickens is known as a master of *caricature*. Students should be encouraged to understand the meaning and techniques of caricature, and to compare it with some of the more modern methods of portraying and dealing with the complexities of human nature. Comparative studies can be particularly rewarding. For example:

a. Cite other Dickens characters and indicate how they are identified (appearance, speech, mannerisms, clothes, physiognomies).
b. Locate and identify caricatures in the works of other authors.
c. Locate and report on caricatured figures in movies, on the stage, on television and radio, in comic strips, satirical magazines, political cartoons, etc.

*14. To illustrate *graphically* the uses of exaggeration and distortion, the teacher can suggest that political cartoons and cartoon strips be brought to class, projected and analyzed. (Students might themselves draw cartoons as illustrations of caricature and stereotyping.)

*15. Creative writing is a good tool to enrich this study. Possible activities include:

a. Re-writing the scene with Portia and Shylock — making Shylock less of an avaricious figure or a figure of ridicule.
b. Similarly revising any scene involving either Shylock or Fagin.
c. Revealing the inmost thoughts of Shylock or Fagin. This can be done by means of the "stream-of-consciousness" technique (as is frequently the case in modern literature) to indicate what characters are thinking, often in great detail. Students may thus illustrate or find extenuating circumstances for the character's behavior.
d. Creating one's own "literary" stereotypes by writing caricatures in the form of brief skits or short stories.

*16. The class would gain important insights from viewing the closed-circuit television (or film) lecture by Professor Ilja Wachs, entitled "The Jewish Stereotype in Literature: Shylock and Fagin." This may be followed by class discussions revolving around such questions as:

a. What are some of the more generally held views with regard to Shakespeare's purpose in writing *The Merchant of Venice?*
b. Compare these with the one propounded by Professor Wachs — namely, that Shakespeare was attacking the growing materialism of the Elizabethan world. Can the class advance any of their own explanations?
c. How does Shylock differ from the portrayal of other Jews in medieval literature; e.g., from Barabbas in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta?*
d. How can one account for the different interpretations of Shylock by leading actors in the more than 300 years that he has been on the stage?
e. Why did Shakespeare make the Christian characters in *The Merchant of Venice* stereotypes in their own way?
f. How can a discussion of stereotypes in literature be utilized to reduce stereotypic thinking on the part of students?
g. What stereotypic features are to be found in Fagin? In the other non-Jewish characters in Dickens' novel?
h. Was Dickens' purpose in writing *Oliver Twist* to epitomize the malevolence of a profit-mad society? If not, what other purposes might he have had?
i. Is this just a novel about the abandonment of a 10-year-old child, or is it perhaps one in which the world as an adult experiences it is screened through the perceptions, sensibility and awareness of the child?
j. What are the effects on easily-impressed adolescents of stereotypes in literature? In specific terms, how can such stereotypes affect their behavior negatively?

* * *

For those teachers who plan to make use of the Supplementary Resource Unit, the following activities and topics will be of *especial* use in the classroom. However, they can be useful as well to *any* teacher, if time permits, as a means of setting Shylock and Fagin in more clear perspective through a socio-historical approach to the whole question of stereotypes and stereotyping.

**17. A student can research and report on the relationships between Jews and non-Jews before and after the Crusades. Important points should include background information as to the status of the Jew, and the image of the Jew as projected by the Crusaders.

*18. Specific stereotypic images of the Jew dating back to the Middle Ages should be presented and discussed. Some, like the 'guilt' of Jews in the

crucifixion of Jesus and the role of Judas, have been recently re-evaluated by the Catholic Church.

**19. One of the more malignant stereotypic images of the Jew has to do with charges of blood libel and ritual murder. Students might report on this subject as it appears in medieval legends and songs, and its carry-over into modern times. Others may discuss its utilization in a popular modern novel (and movie), Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer.*

**20. A student should report on the medieval drama — furnishing the class with background information concerning the actual performances, audience reaction, atmosphere, repertory, etc. Student committees can report on and present excerpts from (as well as lead class discussions of) the medieval mystery plays (such as the *Alsfelder Passionspiel*) and from subsequent dramas (such as Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta,* Hugh of Lincoln, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales,* etc.)

*21. Have the class read selections from some of the poetry, drama and chronicles of the Middle Ages which portrayed Jews; evaluate them for their stereotypic effect, and their role in shaping the way some non-Jews have tended to regard and behave toward Jews.

Bibliography for Teachers and Students

* — indicates books suggested for the average high school student
** — indicates books suggested for the superior high school student
All other books are recommended for teachers

BRANDES, GEORGE. *William Shakespeare, a Critical Study.* 2 vols. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1963.

Brandes, perhaps the greatest literary critic of the early twentieth century, discusses all of Shakespeare's works. In his view, Shylock's behavior becomes more understandable if account is taken of his passionate nature and the degradation to which he has been subjected.

*BROWN, IVOR. *Dickens in His Time.* London: Thomas Nelson, 1963.

Brown describes the political and economic conditions which Dickens attacked in his novels. The book's many illustrations and simple style make it admirably suited for enriching the background of the average high school student.

*BROWN, IVOR. *Shakespeare in His Time.* London: Thomas Nelson, 1960.

This book constitutes a readable introduction to Shakespeare, and provides a good background for high school students.

*CALISCH, EDWARD N. *The Jew in English Literature as Author and Subject.* Port Washington: Kennikat, 1968.

Although this study was originally published in 1909, it is still useful for high school students who wish an overall view of this subject up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

CARDOZO, J. L. *The Contemporary Jew in Elizabethan Drama.* New York: Burt Franklin, 1967.

A reprint of a scholarly work that was originally published in Amsterdam in 1925, it shows how non-English Jews were portrayed by the Elizabethan dramatists.

**CHUTE, MARCHETTE. *Shakespeare of London.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1949. (Also available in paperback.)

This work differs from the many biographical studies of Shakespeare in that it is based entirely on contemporary documents. With respect to Shylock, it praises Shakespeare for the astonishing degree to which he was able to break loose from the traditional portrait of the Jew in English literature.

*DEUTSCH, BABETTE. *The Reader's Shakespeare.* New York: Julian Messner, 1946.

Not written for scholars, this book may help the *beginning* student become better acquainted with Shakespeare's works (including *Merchant of Venice).*

GRANVILLE-BARKER, HARLEY. *Prefaces to Shakespeare.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946. Volume I, pp. 335-364.

Granville-Barker, who was a dramatist, producer and critic, approaches Shylock as well as the other characters in the play from the viewpoint of a director. In his opinion, Shylock is essentially neither a puppet, nor a figure exploited by Shakespeare for the purpose of exemplifying the Semitic stereotype.

**GREBANIER, BERNARD. *The Truth about Shylock.* New York: Random House, 1962.

Viewing *The Merchant of Venice* "as neither an assault upon the Jews nor a defense of them," the author attempts to discover what Shakespeare intended by his portrayal of Shylock through a consideration of the play, not in terms of "a sociological treatise, but as a dramatic entity."

HARBAGE, ALFRED. *As They Liked It.* New York: Harper (paperback), 1961.

This book shows Shakespeare's morality at work. With respect to the *Merchant of Venice,* Harbage demonstrates how Shakespeare deviated from his predecessors in giving Shylock racial pride and family sentiment, a sense of wounded dignity and the eloquence to plead his common humanity.

*HILBET, CHRISTOPHER. *The Making of Charles Dickens.* New York: Harper and Row, 1967.

This biography relates Dickens' personal life to his fiction by comparing sections of his works with actual incidents that occurred to him.

*HOLLAND, NORMAN N. *The Shakespearian Imagination.* New York: The MacMillan Co., 1964.

This book is intended for the intelligent general reader. It approaches thirteen of Shakespeare's plays from both a "newly critical" 20th-century point of view and through the eyes of the age in which Shakespeare lived.

**JOHNSON, EDGAR. *Charles Dickens: Tragedy and Triumph.* 2 vols. New York: Random House, 1952.

This work is acknowledged to be the best biographical and critical study yet written on Dickens. All aspects of his life and craft are dealt with in detail. Students may use this work as the best single reference both for *Oliver Twist* and the other works of Dickens.

JOHNSON, EDGAR. "Dickens, Fagin, and Mr. Riah," *Commentary,* IX (1950), pp. 47-50.

This is an interesting discussion of Dickens' purpose in creating the character of Mr. Riah, the "good Jew," in *Our Mutual Friend.*

**KETTLE, ARNOLD. *An Introduction to the English Novel.* London: Hutchinson House, 1951. Volume I, pp. 123-138. (Also available in paperback, published by Harper.)

This analytic essay on *Oliver Twist* is simple enough for high school students to comprehend, and cogent enough to enable them to gain new insights into Dickens' methods of writing his novels.

LANDA, MYER J. *The Jew in Drama.* Port Washington: Kennikat, 1968.

This study, originally published in London in 1926, traces the portrayals

of Jews in English drama from their first appearance on the stage through the early twentieth century.

**LELYVELD, TOBY. *Shylock on the Stage.* Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1960.

This is a provocative study of the role of Shylock as it has been played by leading actors of the British and American theatre from Shakespeare's time to the present.

**MODDER, MONTAGU F. *The Jew in the Literature of England.* New York: Harper (paperback). Originally published in 1939.

Mr. Modder, a non-Jew, spent many years in an intensive study of the Jew as a character in the literature of England. He has made available a wide selection of material not otherwise easily accessible to the general reader.

*PEARSON, HESKETH. Dickens: *His Character, Comedy and Career.* New York: Harper, 1949.

This work offers insights both into the author's personality and into many of his best-known literary characters.

**QUENNELL, PETER. *Shakespeare, a Biography.* Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1963. (Also available in paperback.)

An account of Shakespeare's life and literary development against the historical background of his age, this work is a composite picture of the dramatist and his milieu.

ROSENBERG, EDGAR. *From Shylock to Svengali.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960.

Centering his attention on nineteenth-century fiction, the author traces the main elements of the stereotype of the Jew. The book is a good introduction to the stereotypic portraits that existed before the nineteenth century.

**ROWSE, A. L. *William Shakespeare.* New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

This book takes an historical approach to Shakespeare's life and work, and their relationship to the Elizabethan age. As such, it provides background and insights for the more literary-minded high school student.

SINSHEIMER, HERMAN. *Shylock.* New York: The Citadel Press (paperback), 1964.

This book analyzes the *Merchant of Venice* as Shakespeare wrote it and as it has been interpreted by actors and critics. It also points out those historical forces which consciously or unconsciously guided Shakespeare as he created the character of Shylock.

**VAN DOREN, MARK. *Shakespeare.* New York: Doubleday and Co. (Anchor Books paperback), 1953. Originally published by Henry Holt and Co., Inc., in 1939.

Written for the more advanced reader of Shakespeare, this work is a critical analysis which is *not* concerned with biography, milieu, theatrical conventions, contemporary works or questions of authorship. The chapter on *The Merchant of Venice* contains a brief, but provocative, commentary on the "style" of Shylock.

Model Instructional Unit

prepared by Milton Silver

In the preceding pages, we have what might properly be referred to as a *resource unit* — that is to say, a reservoir of materials from which the individual teacher may draw in evolving a particular unit (or units) suited to his own as well as to his class' needs and interests. Such units may be brief or long (depending on the time available); separate from or integrated into whatever material the teacher would normally be teaching.

On the other hand, the model instructional unit presented below consists of a more narrow range of objectives and learning activities, plus evaluatory techniques for the teacher and a listing of enrichment aids. It is specifically designed for the teacher with a four-week block of time at his disposal, and outlines in step-by-step fashion concrete lesson plans according to a cohesive, structured and meaningful pattern.

In this particular guide, the teacher will recognize the value, for himself as well as for the class, of background material in medieval history and literature. It is important that students do not tacitly assume that the stereotypic image of the Jews was a phenomenon unique to the Elizabethan period (or, for that matter, any subsequent age, including our own). Where, then, did the distorted image of the Jew come from? Emphasis should be placed on the fact that unfavorable presentations of the Jews in a considerable body of literature date back to 12th century poetry, chronicles and plays. And our concern should be with a fuller awareness of the *sources* (*i.e.*, of the causes and evolution) of negative stereotyping — from a sociological and historical point of view and, certainly, from a literary one. (*See* the Supplementary Resource Unit that follows this unit.)

I. OBJECTIVES

A. Teacher's objectives

1. To understand Shakespeare's characterization of Shylock and Dickens' of Fagin, and to compare and contrast the stereotypic qualities of these two famous figures.
2. To relate the stereotypes in Shakespeare and Dickens to the historical background out of which they evolved. (*See* supplementary section.)

3. To gain an understanding of stereotypes generally, and of stereotyping as it affects minorities in particular.
4. To demonstrate that stereotyping (a) interferes with a person's ability to recognize similar evils in himself or to perceive reality in complex and adult terms; (b) reinforces one's tendencies to project one's own failings and grievances onto others, and (c) limits one's general awareness and sensibility.

B. Pupil's objectives

1. What IS a stereotype? Is it different (and, if so, how) from caricature and satire?
2. Why (and how) do authors utilize stereotypic characters?
3. Why (and how) are Shylock and Fagin stereotypes? Why were these characters created by Shakespeare and Dickens? Are there any other stereotypes in Shakespeare's and Dickens' works? How do they compare with each other and with other examples of stereotyping?
4. What has been the image and status of the Jew in various periods of history (e.g., Middle Ages, Elizabethan England, 19th and 20th century America and Europe)? Has it changed or shifted?
5. What effects can stereotypes have on a person's capacity to perceive reality and to act normally and justly in the world in which he lives? (See listing under "Classroom Activities and Discussion Topics," No. 6.)

II. OVERVIEW

This unit presupposes a prior or supplementary study of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, two standard literary works in the English curriculum. (If, however, this is not so, and the works themselves have to be incorporated into this unit, provision would have to be made for specific, directive activities relating to the play and the novel — and for a time allotment of several additional weeks.) Assuming, then, the students' textual familiarity with Shylock and Fagin, we are presenting approaches and material which deal with a concomitant study of *stereotypes*.

III. APPROACHES

A. Motivations

1. Although magazines and better quality books are printed from electrotypes, stereotyping is used in the printing of newspapers and inexpensive books. A stereotype plate may be secured for class inspection, and students should be asked to comment on its characteristics (emphasizing, of course, rigidity, delimitation, fixedness, etc.). The relevance of the specific meaning to the broader, connotative concept should be indicated, opening the course to a general

discussion of stereotypes. (Since metal stereotype plates can be heavy — that of a *New York Times* page weighs about 60 pounds — the papier maché stereotype can be used more readily.)

2. Have students discuss stereotypes with which they are familiar. Develop the idea that many of their points of view can be made limited or narrow by fixed, false generalizations. Try to determine whether or not students tend to think of certain *groups* of people of specific ethnic, racial, religious, cultural or economic background as stereotypes or as individuals. (What are some of the more common stereotypes? How were these stereotypic impressions formed?) *See* listing under "Classroom Activities and Discussion Topics," No. 6.
3. Set up a class panel to discuss present-day stereotypes. Where do they exist? Do they have any validity? To what extent do they represent a continuation of past stereotyping? What "damage" is done — to the stereotypes? to the stereotypers?
4. The 14-minute tape-recording entitled *N Is for Name Calling* (listed below in Part VII, E) is a very good discussion starter on the general subject of stereotypes and prejudice.

B. Assigned readings

1. Review of class texts — *The Merchant of Venice* (Shylock) and *Oliver Twist* (Fagin).
2. Supplementary reading
   a. Individual reports (*see* IV-A-4, IV-B-2, IV-C-2 below).
   b. Committee reports and panel discussions (*see* IV-A-2-a, IV-B-4-a, IV-B-4-d, IV-B-5).

IV. WORKING PERIOD

A. First week — Introductory activities

1. Further development of the motivations presented above should lead to an evaluation of "class" concepts of the Jewish stereotype. These involve anti-Semitic, "neutral," and pro-Semitic feelings. In any event, assessment should be made of those reactions which are based on inaccurate information or biases rather than on realistic and informed judgments of complex human beings.
2. A related sub-unit might be evolved, in which one is concerned with the subject of anti-Semitism. For example:
   a. A committee can research and report on the causes of anti-Semitism and the evolution of the Jewish stereotype in the Middle Ages. (*See* appropriate references in supplementary research unit below.)
   b. Readings and activities may be drawn from another guide in this series, entitled "The American Jewish Writer."

c. Contemporary movies and films may be viewed and discussed, or dramatized re-enactments evaluated. (*Refer* to Part VII-D, E, and G.)

3. At this point, the class can discuss the difference between the modern or country-club kind of anti-Semitism and that found in *The Merchant of Venice*. This also might be an appropriate time for a preliminary class analysis of the *differences* between Shakespeare's characterization of a Jew and that of Dickens'.
4. Babette Deutsch, writing about Shylock, notes: "The Jews were not so much the bankers of the Christians as their creatures, hunted and tormented only less systematically than in Nazi Germany." A student might wish to refer to the ADL teacher's guide, entitled "Writings of the Nazi Holocaust," and report on parallels between persecutions of the Jews in various periods of history.

B. Second and third weeks — Developmental activities

1. The television (or film) lecture by Prof. Ilja Wachs can be viewed by the class and followed by appropriate discussion questions listed under "Classroom Activities and Discussion Topics," No. 15.
2. Approximately one year before *The Merchant of Venice* was staged, Londoners enjoyed the spectacle of a Jew, Roderigo Lopez, being hanged, drawn and quartered. A student may be assigned to research the Lopez trial and present his findings; this might be followed by a class discussion of implications and relationships.
3. A student may present analysis of the different ways in which Fagin is treated in the Dickens novel and in the movie version entitled *Oliver!*
4. Since the subject of stereotyping and of bigotry constitutes the central theme of this unit, readings and activities should also include some of the following:
   a. Committee reports on examples of literary stereotyping with regard to various other ethnic groups.
   b. Reports on caricature and stereotyping in movies, on television and radio, in comic strips, etc.
   c. Analyses of contemporary stereotyping and its effect on minority groups.
   d. Panel discussions of books like Richard Wright's *Native Son*, as well as other works in which a minority figure is driven to anti-social behavior. (Cf. Shylock.)
   e. A panel discussion, stemming from the above, analyzing how a disadvantaged minority group may direct its hostility toward *another* minority group (e.g., Negro anti-Semitism today).

5. More advanced students might refer to Professor Bernard Grebanier's *The Truth About Shylock* as a source for panel discussions, or for reports and class analysis of such topics as:
   a. Variations in, and distortions of, *The Merchant of Venice.*
   b. Sequels to the play.
   c. English bigotry against Jews.
   d. The usurer.
   e. The pound-of-flesh stories.
   f. Views of Shylock.
   g. Grebanier's view that the major theme of the play is really concerned with the conflict arising from the irreconcilability of the value systems of Shylock and Antonio (rather than with the conflict between Jew and Christian).

C. Fourth week — Culminating activities

1. Students should be called upon to compare and contrast Shylock and Fagin (especially in the light of what they have learned in this unit).
2. Students might report on the contrast between Dickens' unfavorable portrait of a Jew (Fagin) on the one hand, and his expression of "a strong abhorrence of their persecution . . ." as well as his depiction of positive Jewish characters in *Our Mutual Friend* (especially Mr. Riah), on the other.
3. Students should realize that *everyone* can be caricatured or stereotyped. To bring home this point:
   a. Pupils may draw pictures and cartoons caricaturing themselves, classmates, famous personalities, etc.
   b. Political cartoons and professional caricatures may be brought into class and projected and analyzed.
   c. Creative writing activities may include brief sketches in which specific individuals are caricatured and/or stereotyped. "Positive" activities would involve rewriting Shakespeare and Dickens to show greater compassion or truer insight; "negative" activities might include class discussion of (and perhaps even writing) stereotypic diatribes against Catholics or Blacks.

V. EVALUATION TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

1. Teacher observation of student performance.
2. Teacher judgment of student research and of creative activity.
3. Assessment of individual, voluntary work.
4. Student performance on reports, panel discussions and debates.
5. Teacher-made tests.

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VII. INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS (ENRICHMENT MATERIALS AND RESOURCES)

A. Closed-circuit television (or film) broadcast with Professor Ilja Wachs, entitled "The Jewish Stereotype in the Middle Ages: Shylock and Fagin," available from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

B. Student-made illustrative materials, particularly cartoons and caricatures.

C. Political cartoons and professional caricatures.

D. Movies (rental): Available at Films Inc., Wilmette, Ill.

Crossfire. 86 min. M.G.M. A feature film dealing with religious bigotry, this was the first Hollywood motion picture to handle the problem of anti-Semitism forthrightly.

Gentlemen's Agreement. 118 min. 20th Century Fox. A magazine writer pretends that he is Jewish — and is shocked and confused by the anti-Semitism which he encounters.

E. Recordings (available from Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; for purchase or rental, contact nearest regional office).

Hidden Barriers. Four 15-minute programs recorded on two 12" 33⅓ rpm LP's. This album stars Ralph Bellamy, Helen Hayes and Cornell Wilde in dramatized reenactments of real-life situations illustrating minority discrimination.

N Is for Name Calling. Narrated by Marlon Brando, with Sir Lawrence Olivier as Shylock doing a scene from the Merchant of Venice, this 14-minute tape hits hard at stereotypes and prejudices.

F. Recordings (commercial):

Emlyn Williams as Dickens. Spoken Arts 762.

Merchant of Venice. Caedmon 2013 (two records); Caedmon SRS — Stereo 209 (three records); London 4416/1412 (four records).

Oliver! Victor LOCD/LSOD — 2004.

Oliver Twist. (Narrated by James Mason.) Decca 9107.

G. Films (available from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; contact nearest regional office for purchase or rental):

Anti-Semitism in America. 25 min. Dr. Melvin Tumin of Princeton University presents an in-depth study of the attitudes and motivations behind anti-Semitism.

The Victims. 48 min. Dr. Benjamin Spock diagnoses the causes of prejudice in children.

H. Filmstrip (available from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; for purchase, contact nearest regional office):

Rumor Clinic. 4 frames. This audience participation program demonstrates how rumors start and spread.

Supplementary Resource Unit

Reprinted on the following pages is textual material based on two scripts originally delivered on closed-circuit television. The subject was "The Jew in the Middle Ages: Evolution of a Stereotype." Because of their overall difficulty and the fact that they are more social history than literature, these excerpts can serve best — though not exclusively — as source material for the teacher. Such background information should be particularly useful as the teacher addresses himself to the following questions:

1. What were the relationships between Christians and Jews prior to, during, and after the Crusades?
2. What image of the Jew was developed and presented in the Middle Ages?
3. What were — and continue to be — the results of such anti-Semitic stereotyping?

1. The Jew in the Middle Ages: Evolution of a Stereotype*

by RABBI DAVID W. SILVERMAN

Note. This text is based on the original script delivered by Rabbi Silverman of the Jewish Theological Seminary on closed circuit television, and is now available on 16 mm. film or videotape. For information on rental or purchase, write to: Audio-Visual Dept., Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 315 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016, or contact the regional office nearest you.

Jewish history during the Middle Ages falls into two distinct periods — before and after the great crusades of Christendom. On the whole, Christians and Jews lived in relative peace before the eleventh century. One fact which attests to the truth of this statement is that until the eleventh century, no medieval chronicle mentions any significant outburst of popular hatred against the Jews — and this despite the fact that Jews were not and could not become members of the official polity that was called Christendom. Due to this exclusion, however, there was always present an undercurrent of suspicion and resentment; and this climate was ultimately to form the backdrop for the storm of hatred which burst out during the Crusades and drenched many Jewish communities in blood.

One other factor should be kept in mind. Even during the centuries of persecution that followed the Crusades, Christian and Jew alike shared a common climate of ideas. The vast storehouse of Greek philosophic literature was made available to the Christian medieval church through the efforts of Jewish translators, who in turn had received it from the Syrian Greeks and the Arabs. Thus, in the thirteenth century, we see St. Thomas Aquinas freely admitting the extent of his dependence upon his Jewish theological predecessor, Moses Maimonides.

Not only in philosophy, but in the sciences and mathematics as well, Jewish and Christian thinkers often found themselves partners in a common venture. Several popes of the 14th and 15th century commissioned the astronomical and mathematical tables (made available to them in Latin translation) of such Jewish scientists as Levi ben Gerson and Jacob Anatoli. And this street ran in both directions. Thus, modern research has demonstrated the undeniable influence of Aquinas and Duns Scotus upon the thought of Gersonides and Crescas.

The last instance of pre-Crusade social amity between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities involves one Rudiger, Bishop of Speyer. In 1084, he granted the Jews a 'charter' stating that their presence "greatly increases the renown of the city" and authorizing them (in defiance of a growing sentiment against the Jews) to keep Christian servants and serfs, to own fields and vineyards and to carry arms. Similarly, Rudiger's successor, Bishop John of Speyer, was one of many bishops who stoutly defended the Jewish community against the murderous wrath of the mobs during the Crusades.

It was Pope Urban II who launched the First Crusade, urging Western Christians to reconquer Palestine from the Moslems and restore it to the Church. Urban II assured the faithful that anyone who died fighting for the recapture of the Holy Land would be admitted into Paradise. As a consequence, thousands of knights rallied to his banner.

A chronicler of that time, Guilbert de Nogent, reported the Crusaders as saying to themselves:

> We desire to go and fight God's enemies in the East; but we have before our eyes certain Jews, a race more inimical to God than any other. . . .

Another chronicler, Richard of Poitiers, wrote:

> . . . Before journeying to these places, they (the Crusaders) exterminated by many massacres the Jews of almost all Gaul, with the exception of those who accepted conversion. They said in effect that it was unjust to permit enemies of Christ to remain alive in their own country, when they had taken up arms to drive out the infidels abroad.

The Jewish communities of France therefore dispatched a letter to their co-religionists in Germany, warning them of the approaching danger. (Both in status and in number, the German-Jewish communities were pre-eminent in medieval Europe.) At first the German Jews refused to believe the warning. But the persistent rumors of destruction and death persuaded them at last to seek the aid of the nobility and of their non-Jewish neighbors. Although promised full protection, they nonetheless awaited the arrival of the Crusaders with considerable dread.

In June 1096, the Crusader armies reached the Rhine. Those Jews living in the cities along that river hid in the palaces of the bishops and in Christian homes; still others remained in their own households. In spite of this, however, in community after community Jews were sought out by the Crusaders and massacred — that is, unless they accepted religious conversion.

Here is how a Christian chronicler, Albert of Aix, described what occurred in the city of Mainz:

> Emicho (one of the leaders of the First Crusade) and all his men, having taken counsel, proceeded at sunrise to attack the Jews with lances and

> axes. . . . Having broken the locks and knocked in the doors, they seized and killed seven hundred who vainly sought to defend themselves against forces far superior to their own; whatever their sex, they were put to the sword. The Jews, seeing the Christians rise as enemies against them and their children with no respect for the weakness of age, took arms in turn against their co-religionists, against their wives, their children, their mothers, and their sisters, and massacred their own. A horrible thing to tell of — the mothers seized the sword, cut the throats of the children at their breast, choosing to destroy themselves with their own hands rather than succumb to the blows of the uncircumcized! Only a small number of Jews escaped this cruel massacre and a few accepted baptism, much more out of fear of death than from love of the Christian faith.

Against this depiction of pillage and massacre, we should point out that almost everywhere there were nobles and bishops who attempted to protect the Jews, yielding to the Crusaders only when their own lives were put in jeopardy.

The first attempt at large-scale massacre occurred at Speyer on May 3, 1096. Thanks, however, to the swift and forceful intervention of Bishop Jean, who forced Emicho's men to disperse, only eleven Jews were killed. Two weeks later, the scene shifted to the city of Mainz, where the ensuing slaughter is faithfully described in the above-mentioned chronicle. Even then, the masses were generally sympathetic to the Jews, and occasionally supported them. It was only the criminal elements of the population who joined the slaughtering Crusaders.

The First Crusade took thousands of Jewish lives. During the Second and Third Crusades (1144; 1189) much the same took place. Inevitably, Jewish-Christian relations were profoundly affected by these three Crusades. In fact, the Crusaders projected an image of the Jew which was to distort Jewish-Christian relationships for almost nine centuries. Throughout Europe, the following Jewish stereotypes began to flourish in the imagination of prince and pauper alike:

> The Jew was a stranger everywhere. He was fated to be a wanderer to the end of recorded time.
>
> Some Jews had aided in the conviction and crucifixion of Jesus in the first century. All Jews were, therefore, corporately and completely guilty of this crime to the end of recorded time.
>
> By the very difference of his beliefs and life-style, the Jew threatened the foundations of Western Christendom.
>
> The Jew flouted the unity of medieval society.
>
> The Jew was a saboteur who poisoned wells, murdered children and desecrated the Host.
>
> Indeed, the Jew was in fact a partner of Satan.

These false and injurious images of the Jew actively entered into the poetry, drama and chronicles of the late Middle Ages. This spectacular misrepresentation of an entire people was conveyed as literal truth to

the masses. The libel that spread furthest and deepest was the one which alleged that the Jews were in league with Satan because they had witnessed and abetted the Crucifixion of Jesus. In tableaux, legends and popular songs the word "Jew" became increasingly linked with the demonic, the corrupt and the malignant. Thus, according to one of the most popular poems of the fourteenth century, the blood of Christian children was necessary for the celebration of the Paschal feast. Spread through the medium of popular ballads, this accusation of ritual murder became part and parcel of French and Flemish folklore.

But vicious slander of this type was not confined to any one country or to any particular literary type. Though the Jews had already been expelled from England in 1290, anti-Semitism (particularly as it manifested itself in literature) grew even stronger there during the fourteenth century. By 1355 there were, for example, 27 different versions of a work entitled "Ballad of Sir Hugh, or The Jew's Daughter," which (together with other legends) was to inspire Chaucer's "Prioress' Tale."

Chaucer begins his tale with the following:

> Ther was in Asye, in a great citee,
> Amonges Cristene folk, a Jewerye,
> Sustened by a lord of that contree
> For foule usure and lucre of vileynye,
> Hateful to Crist and to his compaignye. . . .

A literal translation of this would read:

> There was in Asia, in a large city
> And among Christian folk, a Jewish community
> Maintained by a lord of that area,
> That was hateful to Christ and to his followers
> For their foul usury and filthy money. . . .

It remained for the drama, however, to bring home incisively and insistently the devilish character of the Jew. For it was on the stage that the Jew assumed the proportions of a Satanic figure, always lurking in the shadows and ready to lead the unwary into sin. And it was on the stage that the Jew became transformed into a stereotype and a myth, inspiring hatred, fear and disgust.

To understand fully how drama could be this effective, one must realize that the performance of a play was a communal event. Theatre then — to draw a modern parallel — was a combination of a TV western, a boxing match and a circus sideshow, all rolled into one. The repertory was limited to religious themes, such as the Crucifixion, and taken directly from the New Testament.

Because of the atmosphere of violence that was a staple element in medieval life, this story would be rendered in the bloodiest and most

sadistic manner possible. The contrast between the characters in the story was drawn with stark simplicity: on the one hand, the perfidy and faithlessness of the Jew; on the other, the Christian purity and majesty of the Holy Family. In this fashion, dramatic literature forged mental and linguistic associations into one stereotype, overwhelming in its power and influence. Thus, Jews were automatically "perverse," "traitorous," "false," "cursed" and "felonious." (cf. M. Bulard, *Le Scorpion, symbole du peuple juif dans l'art religieuse des XIVe, XVe, siecles,* Paris, 1938.)

Traces of this medieval literary propaganda still echo in many modern European dictionaries. The definition of the word "Jew" in Murray's *Oxford Dictionary* is grim testimony to the power of dramatic literature to reinforce stereotypes: ". . . a name of opprobrium or reprobation; specifically applied to a grasping or extortionate moneylender or usurer, or a trader who drives hard bargains or deals craftily. . . ."

Of all forms of drama, the most powerful popularizer of the mythical Jew were the mystery plays of the Middle Ages which riveted this stereotype onto the minds and hearts of their audience. The performance of these plays catalyzed the entire local Christian community. All work was suspended; shops were closed; the commercial and civic life of the town came to a complete halt. And most of these plays lasted three whole days. In Germany, for example, the *Alsfelder Passionspiel* spent the first day depicting a conclave of devils plotting the death of Jesus. On the second day, the betrayal by Judas and the deliverance of the thirty pieces of silver were dramatically magnified. (In this embroidery of the gospel text, the Jewish origin of Judas was stressed, while Jesus and the other Apostles were depicted as Christians, though of Jewish birth or background.) Finally, during the third day, the work of torture and crucifixion were assigned solely to the Jews, while the Romans were absolved of any complicity.

Thus it was that the *medieval Christian imagination* became peopled with Jewish "types" who, while superhuman in their power, were subhuman in their devotion to evil and sin. Once firmly lodged in the imagination, this image of the Jew was to bear poisoned fruit — the ghetto, the pogrom and the general dehumanization of the Jew.

Another accusation leveled against the Jews grew out of the Black Plague which ravaged Europe in the years 1347 and 1350, annihilating one-third to one-half of the population. Throughout Europe, men searched for the cause of the plague. According to Jean d'Outremeuse:

> . . . It was commonly said and certainly believed that this epidemic came from the Jews, and that the Jews had cast great poisons in the wells and springs throughout the world, in order to sow the plague and to poison Christendom; which was why great and small alike had great rage against the Jews. . . .

This popular prejudice was to infuse literature which, in turn, buttressed it by repetition. Here is another quotation — this time from the *Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlowe — spoken by *Barabbas,* a Jew:

> I walk abroad o'nights
> and kill sick people groaning under walls;
> Sometimes I go about the poison wells. . . .

The Jews were expelled from England in 1290; from France in 1306 and again in 1394; from Spain in 1492. From this point on, most of Western Europe was closed to the Jews, and the majority of Jewish refugees found asylum either in Moslem lands or in Eastern Europe.

For these enforced migrations the Church bore a definite responsibility. Although the Papacy usually treated the Jews with more leniency than they were accorded by secular rulers, it nevertheless remains true that the expulsion of the Jews from various Catholic countries of Europe was, to a large extent, brought about through papal influence. (At the same time, it should also be remembered that, until the nineteenth century, Protestantism was by and large as intolerant of the Jews as was the Roman Catholic Church.)

It is a black and bitter story, this account of Jewish-Christian relations during the Middle Ages. The Christian feared and slaughtered the Jew; the Jew feared and despised the Christian. In the eyes of the Christian, the Jew was bent on destroying Christianity; in the eyes of the Jew, the Christian was a barbarian with only a thin veneer of religion and morality.

2. The Jew in the Middle Ages: Evolution of a Stereotype

by RGT. REV. MSGR. EUGENE V. CLARK

Note. This text is based on the original script delivered by Msgr. Clark, Secretary to Terence Cardinal Cooke, Archbishop of New York, on closed circuit television, and is now available on 16 mm. film or videotape. For information on rental or purchase, write to: Audio-Visual Dept., Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 315 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016, or get in touch with the regional office nearest you.

In approaching this subject and in responding to Rabbi Silverman's commentary, I suggest we keep in mind several points that must affect our judgment in considering what non-Jews thought about Jews down the ages.

First of all, during most of the Middle Ages, Jews and Christians lived together in peace. Though outbreaks of anti-Semitic activity occurred from time to time, the overwhelming majority of Christians treated Jews normally, and were rewarded in turn by friendly contacts with them. Futhermore, it is clear that the persecutors were, with rare exception, either thugs, fanatics or people with minimal education.

The cause of this persecution was not a general hatred of the Jew, but rather the Jew's unique vulnerability during the feudal period. But neither this vulnerability nor the local persecutions suggest in themselves a *universal* dislike of the Jew. Just as today we are unsure what Americans in general think about the President, we should be equally wary of condemning the medieval Christian for attitudes which we can only guess at. Above all, it is a great distortion to see medieval man sharing the degenerate anti-Semitism either of the Enlightenment or of pagan Nazism.

The fact is that the medieval Jew suffered from a number of disabilities because he did not and could not fit into feudal society — a society (and there was no other) that was put together for purposes of sheer survival. Surrounded by enemies to the north, east and south, and menaced as well by internal lawlessness, serfs, warriors and clerics, all swore oaths of mutual support. (These were Christian oaths, the only kind that bound.) The Jew, on the other hand, had *no* way to enter or become an integral part of that society. Though not excluded out of calculated vindictiveness, he nonetheless remained an outsider — legally, economically and socially — since membership was based on religious oaths of interdependence.

It is therefore a "cart-before-the-horse" reading of history to say that the exclusion of the Jew was mainly due to theological, scriptural or racial animosities. No one at that time could have devised a way to make a Jew a lord or a landowner or a knight. I say all this because some people suffer from a tendency to see this exclusion as deriving from the New Testament — as if other manifest reasons did not exist for it.

With regard to the murder of Jews by Crusaders, I think the following should be kept in mind: that Jews lived in Spain under Moslem rule for a long time, enjoying a freedom largely unknown to them in Christendom; and that, at the same time, Jews had been prominent members of certain European communities in the period before the Crusades. It is not difficult to see, then, the obvious danger to which this double position made them vulnerable in a period of Moslem-Christian wars, and that this vulnerability had nothing to do with the New Testament. Yet dozens of books published in the last twenty years on the history of anti-Semitism have ignored this situation.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Christians fought an intermittent yet total war against the Moslems, who at various times occupied Spain and parts of France, ravaged the entire Mediterranean coast and nearly captured Vienna. Particularly in periods of high combat, these same Christians could not be unconscious of the fact that many Jews led comfortable and prosperous lives in communities belonging to the Moslem enemy. In certain cases Jews even became governors of Spanish cities captured by the Moslems. We must surely see here an origin for the gross popular suspicion about Jews as pro-Moslem outsiders, as well as a reason for the fury of the Crusaders. This anger did not really grow out of any desire to avenge the death of Christ, or any of the other nonsense spouted by the murderers after they had killed Jews.

Of course, this central explanation does not make the anti-Semitic outbursts of the Crusaders any the less shocking. But it does place the persecution in historical perspective. At the same time, it obviates the need to see medieval man as anti-Semitic by instinct, or because of theological or ecclesiastical direction — notions cultivated by many journalists writing history today.

Similarly, it only confuses the question we are considering here if almost every development in Western society is linked or attributed directly to Christianity. In current magazine articles, such diverse elements as the guild system, post-bubonic depression, Franco's victory in Spain, capitalism, nationalism and even the Mafia are connected directly with Christianity. The final absurdity is to pose pagan, anti-Christian Nazism as a development growing out of Christian ideas.

Despite our shock at Nazi atrocities, we should not let ourselves be seduced into accepting simplistic explanations as to the origins and causes

of that ghastly phenomenon. Because anti-Semites sometimes appeal to religion as they do to superstition, racism, fear or hatred, their appeal does not make religion a cause of anti-Semitism. In fact, the opposite is almost certainly true. Writers who describe anti-Semitism as a child of Christianity usually also describe nationalism as a child of Christianity — an equally absurd thesis, historically speaking.

Some material advanced as evidence of medieval anti-Semitism is likewise out of focus. The ghetto, for instance, was usually not a form of persecution. In fact the cultural encapsulation of the ghetto often saved Jewish identity, and was acceptable both to Jewish leadership and family heads. Similarly, decrees by princes establishing ghettos were often honest petitions granted to Jews permitting them to settle in a town in which they could not hold land either by contract or by ownership. In short, there is no relation between the medieval ghettos and the ghettos of the Czars.

In any case, the fact is that the Jew clearly *did* live on the edge of society, and that, in the role of the mysterious outsider, he was a perfect and ready-made scapegoat for anyone who wished to exploit him as such. The ancient human lust for 'sensationalism' made the average man vulnerable to bizarre stories about a people with whom he personally had no familiarity. This, of course, is no unique phenomenon. Who, for example, was the classic villain of the 1930's? The sinister figure who used spine-chilling tortures? The Chinaman! *Nothing* was too fantastic or evil to be attributed to the mysterious slant-eyed Oriental, *precisely* because he was an outsider. As historians, therefore, we should not so much focus our attention on sensational stories concerning Jewish immorality that were circulated, but rather on his prior precarious position as an outsider. As such, he was not only extremely vulnerable to any shift in public attitude, but was constantly aware that even the wildest rumor about him could serve as a first step toward swift and savage persecution.

I submit to you, then, that my own reading of medieval history leads me to see twin roots for the sporadic medieval persecution of the Jews: gullibility to sensationalism growing out of a fear of a relatively unknown people, and the enduring suspicion that Jews commonly trafficked with Europe's enemy, the Moslems.

Seen within this context, our own ideals may shine more clearly for us today against the dark background of those moments in history when justice was not strong enough to contain violence and ignorance.*

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*Following these two lectures, there was a panel discussion (the text of which is not included). Along with Rgt. Rev. Msgr. Clark and Rabbi Silverman, the participants were two English teachers from the New York metropolitan area:

1. Mr. Jerome Martin, Fordham University Preparatory School.
2. Sister Mary Clark, Manhattanville College.

Additional Remarks

While it is generally accepted that during the Middle Ages the Jews of Western Europe were frequently considered "outsiders" and were deprived of the political, economic and social privileges enjoyed by their Christian neighbors, there is no general agreement as to why these conditions existed or who exactly was responsible. Similarly, although many people know something about the purposes, the organization and the consequences of the Crusades of the 11th and 12th centuries, it is not widely known that in the line of march of the Crusaders to the Holy Land, tens of thousands of Jews were massacred by members of the Crusading armies, their property stolen and their homes destroyed. On the other hand, in spite of this situation and these events, it appears equally true that in the intellectual realm (even during the darkest periods of persecution) contacts were made and kept open between Christians and Jews and that philosophers and scientists on both sides freely acknowledged their indebtedness to one another.

This apparent contradiction, as well as many other important aspects of the relationship that existed between Christians and Jews during the Middle Ages, form the basis of the two preceding lectures. In reading and reviewing them, you will learn a good deal from the chroniclers of that period about the sufferings and afflictions of many Jews in European communities at the hands of the Crusaders, as well as the protection and sympathy offered Jews by certain leaders of the church and the nobility and also by the mass of the common people. The latter fact is particularly important for us to be aware of, since it indicates that for hundreds of years prior to this period there had been relatively harmonious relationships between Christians and Jews.

We must therefore ask ourselves the question: If harmonious relationships *did* exist for hundreds of years between Christians and Jews, what was it that suddenly caused the hostility on the one hand, and the fear, suspicion and persecution on the other? The lectures you have just read present two alternative explanations for this situation; and there may well be even additional ones.

In any case, of one thing we may be certain. The literature of the Middle Ages almost invariably presented the Jews in an unfavorable light — both in the physical and the moral sense. The main features of

this image of the Jew began to emerge in poetry, drama and chronicle as early as the 12th century. In fact, some remnants of that stereotype have not been eradicated even today.

It is true, of course, that stereotypes of other nationalities have likewise been part of world literature. The stage Irishman, the stage Negro and the stage Italian are but a few examples. Yet, from the point of view of duration, universality and damage done, none of these stereotypes can compare with the ones surrounding the Jew. In English literature alone, some scholars have traced an unbroken sequence of almost 700 years of stereotyping, and we have not even considered the image of the Jew as it is reflected in other European literatures.

This question of negative stereotyping — and it is a fundamental one — is a question to which all persons of good will *must* address themselves if they wish not only to understand the origins of this problem, but also to correct or eliminate the exaggerations, distortions and falsifications of the image of the Jew both in history and in literature.

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